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Auction **Fine Art**

Date 17.11.2023, ca. 15:24

Preview 10.11.2023 - 10:00:00 bis
13.11.2023 - 18:00:00

BOULLOGNE, LOUIS DE
Paris 1654 - 1733

Title: The Abduction of Helen.
Technique: Oil on canvas.
Mounting: Relined.
Measurement: 80 x 100cm.
Notation: Old inventory number lower right: 1036.
Frame: Framed.
Verso:
On the stretcher old adhesive labels.

Certificate:
Francois Marandet, London 04.09.2023, here with possible provenance indication Auction Estate of Jeanne-Baptiste d'Albert de Luynes, Comtesse de Verrue (1670-1736), 27.03.1737.

Provenance:
Private ownership, Germany.

In biographies from the 18th century to modern art historical studies, art historians have always noted the similarities between the style of Bon Boullogne, called Boullogne the Elder (Paris 1649-1717), and his younger brother Louis de Boullogne, called Boullogne the Younger (Paris 1654-1733). Recently, however, it has been demonstrated that both artists had their own style. While Bon Boullogne always tried to imitate contemporary Dutch genre scenes, Louis de Boullogne remained faithful to his main source of inspiration: the 17th century Bolognese masters, especially Francesco Albani and Guido Reni. The present composition is inextricably linked to Guido Reni's masterpiece illustrating the same story. The Abduction of Helen, now in the Louvre, was one of the paintings that adorned the famous Galerie de la Vrillière in Paris at the time. Louis de Boullogne knew it even better, for his father Louis Boullogne (1609-1674), one of the founders of the Royal Academy in 1648, had made a print after the same painting by Guido Reni. The idea of the procession led by Paris gently approaching the shore is clearly taken from the Bolognese artist's composition. The same applies to the gesture of the Trojan prince turning towards Helena. Guido Reni had transformed the scene of Helen's abduction into something slightly theatrical, as if the disastrous consequences that led to the Trojan War could easily be forgotten. Louis de Boullogne goes one step further by toning down the depiction of the scene, which takes the form

of a comedy: the two heroes, the servants, Venus and Hymen all have smiling expressions on their faces, which is again a typical sign of Louis de Boullogne's style.

The attribution of the painting to Louis de Boullogne can be confirmed by another signed version sold in Paris (Palais Galliera) on 3 December 1969 (lot 49, as Louis de Boullogne). This composition (h. 0.93; l. 1.26; signed lower left) is slightly larger and seems to be almost identical to our painting. The only difference is the rowing boat, which is between the shore and the ships in the background. This detail is difficult to decipher in the old black and white photograph but becomes clearer in a third version, which, despite the numerous overpaintings, is an autonomous work (on the Dutch art market 2021; H. 1.06; L. 1.42, as "Flemish School"). At one of the largest French auctions of the early 18th century, the one of the Comtesse de Verrue in 1737, a Rape of Helen by Louis de Boullogne the Younger is mentioned (see our section on evidence). Since the artist created three versions, it is difficult to determine the one that was in the Verrue collection (the dimensions are not given even in the sales document). However, the quality of our version is such that it could be the version of the Countess of Verrue, whose taste was known to be very discerning.

Estimate: 10.000 € - 20.000 €; Hammer: 11.000 €
